



TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS BRIEF

2004 ACT STUDENT OPINION SURVEY

In April 2004, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness conducted the fifth administration of the ACT Student Opinion Survey over the course of ten years. As part of its on-going effort to measure student satisfaction with instructional programs, student services, and other aspects of the college experience, and in an effort to inform the ten-year SACS self-study process, this study highlights some of the changing trends over the past ten years. As in previous years, a stratified random sample of students was surveyed from each campus, from various disciplines, and with varying attendance patterns. The survey was administered to 467 students (61%) out of a sample size of 766 students.

Respondents mirrored the college's student demographic profile, which included diverse backgrounds and a wide range of ages. Reflective of the college's changing demographics, the percentage of Caucasian respondents has decreased by 17% in the past ten years, while African-American respondents increased 13% in the same time period. Additionally, the increasing enrollment of "traditional students" is evidenced by several demographic factors that increased by more than 10% over the past ten years: respondents with the primary purpose of transferring to a four-year institution (25% increase); enrolled full time (21% increase); unmarried (17% increase); attended classes primarily during the day (21% increase); and entered directly from high school (13% increase).

Most respondents cited low cost (69%), convenient location (61%), the availability of desired courses (57%), and the ability to work while attending (53%) as the primary reasons for enrolling at TCC. In the last ten years, the low cost and convenient location have become increasingly important to students (13% and 9% increase, respectively). At the same time, the percentage of respondents receiving some form of financial aid has increased from 34% in 1994 to 43% in 2004. Students also cited potential for success (33%) and availability of scholarships and financial aid (28%) as important reasons for enrolling. Very few respondents reported that high school counselors or parents/relatives had any influence on their decision to attend TCC.

TCC was the college of first choice for approximately 70% of the respondents and most held positive impressions of their classroom experience: students were satisfied with class size (83%), testing and grading (82%), and attitude of teaching staff toward students (78%). Over 70% of the respondents also cited satisfaction with course content in major, quality of instruction, variety of courses offered, flexibility to design program of study, and challenge in program of study. Ninety-five percent of the students had access to a computer outside of the college for academic work, an increase of 41% over ten years, and 93% indicated access to the internet. Of those who enrolled in a distance learning course, 82% perceived the course as at least or more academically rigorous as traditionally delivered courses.

After several years of increasing satisfaction ratings with admissions and registration procedures, the 2004 survey indicated a leveling off in terms of satisfaction. This could be a result of the college's conversion to an online registration system and the inherent glitches that accompany any transformation of business practices and procedures that involve technology and innovation. Overall, 70% of the respondents were satisfied with general admissions/entry procedures. Additionally, high ratings were given to college catalog/admissions publications (79%) and the accuracy of information received before enrolling (70%). When asked to identify which college publications were used most frequently, the top three sources were website information (41%), printed catalog (32%), and printed schedule book (20%). An area that has shown marked improvement since

1994 is the availability of financial aid information prior to enrolling (51% satisfied in 1994 compared to 61% satisfied in 2004).

In an effort to gain baseline data for student satisfaction and usage of the new student information system, several questions were included to determine student perceptions. While the vast majority of respondents (over 88%) had used the web for registration and related activities, 35% had not used it for payment of tuition. Over 70% of the students indicated satisfaction with checking real-time course status (70%), enrolling in a class (78%), paying tuition with credit card (70%), printing class schedule (80%), and obtaining grades (75%). Reviewing the academic advisement plan and checking financial aid awards received 62% and 60% satisfaction ratings, respectively.

The survey examined frequency of use and level of satisfaction with a number of co-curricular services and facilities. Several areas that have experienced a large increase in usage over the past ten years include advising, financial aid, library/LRC, tutoring, and computer services. Approximately one-third (34%) of the spring 2004 students indicated they had taken advantage of learning assistance provided outside of the classroom (i.e. tutoring, Math lab, Writing Center, Supplemental Instruction). With enhanced demand for these services, satisfaction levels have increased or remained about the same.

Usage and Satisfaction with Select Co-Curricular Services

Co-Curricular Services	Usage		Satisfaction	
	199	2004	199	2004
Academic	59	73%	62	66%
Computer	34	68%	86	86%
Financial Aid	32	49%	67	66%
Library/LRC	68	80%	85	89%
Orientation	29	32%	68	72%
Tutoring	11	23%	77	73%

The college has made a concerted effort over the past ten years to provide a higher level of student involvement in college governance and student activities. The impact of this effort is evident in the increase over the ten-year period in respondents' satisfaction with student voice in college policies (11% increase), rules governing student conduct (8% increase), purposes for use of student fees (15% increase), personal involvement in college activities (12% increase), and student government (11% increase).

Finally, when comparing TCC respondent data with the nationally normed data for similar colleges, TCC had scores above the national average with regard to library/LRC services, academic variety and program of study, testing and grading, most registration and admissions services (including publications), rules and regulations governing students (conduct, academic policies, use of student activity fees), and lab facilities (including computer labs). Areas where the college scored below the national average included services typically found in student centers (day care, health services, student employment services), advising (availability of counselors, academic course planning, and career advisement), and some facilities areas (industrial arts shop facilities, student center, athletic facilities).

Overall, students are satisfied with their TCC experience. Students are showing overwhelming approval of the college's investments over the last ten years in terms of infrastructure, facilities, technology, business practices and policies. It is evident that the college's investments have been aimed at enhancing the first two years of the baccalaureate experience and developing the workforce opportunities in the community it serves. However, in times of limited resources and growing demand for educational services, the survey data alludes to the need for student centers, improved facilities for the industrial technologies, and enhanced advising services on the campuses.